



Article from

## **Stepping Stone**

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# WHAT WOULD YOU DO? To Consult or Not to Consult

By John West Hadley

Here is lucky 13 in the “*What Would You Do?*” series.<sup>1</sup> Write to me at [SteppingStone@JHACareers.com](mailto:SteppingStone@JHACareers.com) to tell me what you would do. In the August issue, I’ll compile the responses received (preserving your anonymity, of course), along with what actually happened in the real-life situation.

Help me craft future case studies. Write to me about your own challenging, surprising or nightmarish situations involving business, leadership, management, or any of the topic areas covered by *The Stepping Stone*, and what lessons you learned from them. I’ll collaborate with you on turning your situation into a simple case study, being careful to ensure no one is identifiable. And share your own thoughts (pro and con) on the series as a whole at [SteppingStone@JHACareers.com](mailto:SteppingStone@JHACareers.com).



## TO CONSULT OR NOT TO CONSULT

West headed up an actuarial operation, but realized that his heart was no longer in it. His company went through a merger, and this was his chance to try something new. He had always loved the many large systems projects with which he had been involved or led, so he took his severance package and decided to strike out in a new career direction.

West had always seen himself as a corporate guy, very comfortable working in teams and enjoying the security of an “employer.” He briefly considered starting a consulting practice, but found the idea of needing to market himself to survive intimidating.

After searching for a number of months, a large insurer offered West a financially lucrative consulting assignment doing exactly the sort of systems work he loved to do. The chief actuary offered him a guaranteed two-month assignment, and told him there was a possibility of a six-month renewal after that.

Three weeks into the assignment, an old friend offered him a corporate role at a large reinsurer. Financially it was equivalent to the consulting assignment, after taking benefits, etc., into account. The role was still systems-oriented, but more “traditional” and less interesting to West than the consulting work. And to his surprise, he found that:

- In the consulting role, he felt like a weight had lifted from his shoulders that he never realized had been there, and
- His mindset around self-marketing had taken a 180-degree turn and no longer seemed like something to fear.

Still, he had kids who would be going to college in a few years, and the corporate role did offer stability...

What would you do? ■



John Hadley is a career counselor who works with job seekers frustrated with their search and with professionals struggling to increase visibility and influence. Reach him at [John@JHACareers.com](mailto:John@JHACareers.com) or 908.725.2437. Find *Career Tips* and other free resources at [www.JHACareers.com](http://www.JHACareers.com).

### ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> Past issues in the series have considered whether to demote or fire a difficult employee, performance reviews and their aftermath, interview challenges from both sides of the desk, evaluating job offers, a difficult product decision, how to build connections with the home office, and career decisions. To catch up on the entire series, which started in May 2013, check out back issues of *The Stepping Stone* on the Leadership & Development Section website at [www.soa.org/ld](http://www.soa.org/ld).